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ABSTRACT

The economic gains and educational advances that social activism of the 1960's brought for blacks and minorities are now being cut back. Abandonment of beneficial programs is being rationalized in a new conservative recession economy. The National Urban League, in seeking to bring about an educational system "from the cradle throughout retirement with full involvement of those served," is concerned with the effects of budget cuts on educational programs. Cuts based on declines in district enrollment in urban areas are based on the decline of white sectors; inner city black schools have constant or even increasing enrollment. Head Start and community-based early childhood education should be preserved, not incorporated into the school systems. New approaches to counseling should be identified and developed, especially in elementary schools. The issue of unfair school suspensions and violence in schools could be addressed by general improvement in learning environments. The three out of four blacks who do not go to college should be encouraged to fight for up-to-date vocational training such as computer science or electronics. Black organizations should renew their commitment to the fight for an educational structure that reflects the needs, interests, and aspirations of black people. (Author/KR)

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AT
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NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
National Urban League
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

IT IS NO SECRET THAT AMERICA TODAY IS IN FULL RETREAT FROM THE PROMISES IT MADE ITS BLACK AND MINORITY PEOPLES JUST A SHORT DECADE AGO. WHERE ONCE A PRESIDENT STOOD IN THE WELL OF THE CONGRESS AND PROCLAIMED "WE SHALL OVERCOME," A FEW YEARS LATER BLACK PEOPLE WERE COLLECTIVELY PLACED ON THE ENEMY'S LIST AND MADE TO "TWIST SLOWLY, SLOWLY IN THE WIND."

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THE GREAT DREAMS ENGENDERED BY THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION HAVE TURNED INTO DESPERATE DEFENSE OF HARD-WON GAINS AND ATTEMPTS TO RESIST THE FURTHER EROSION OF THOSE GAINS. THE COMBINATION OF WHITE INTRANSIGENCE, NIXON'S MALIGN NEGLECT POLICY AND THE MANUFACTURED RECESSION THAT ROLLED BACK BLACK ECONOMIC ADVANCES HAVE PLACED US FIRMLY IN YET ANOTHER POST-RECONSTRUCTION ERA OF ASSAULTS UPON OUR RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES.

NOWHERE CAN THIS BE SEEN MORE CLEARLY THAN IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION THAT HAS RESULTED IN EVERY FOURTH BLACK WORKER JOBLESS AND TWO OUT OF THREE BLACK TEENAGERS WITHOUT WORK. THE WAR ON POVERTY HAS TURNED INTO A WAR ON THE POOR WITH THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF LEADING A CRUSADE, NOT TO BRING JOBS AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO THE MILLIONS IN NEED, BUT TO CUT BACK THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND SLASH ALL SOCIAL EXPENDITURES.

THE SOCIAL ACTIVISM OF THE 1960S HAS GIVEN WAY TO A NEW CONSERVATISM, A SWING BACK TO A CONCEPTION OF OUR SOCIETY AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT IS BASED ON THE NARROWEST GOALS AND METHODS. THE SAME EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO WAS HELD UP TO US AS BEING THE

VEHICLE FOR ADVANCEMENT AND MOBILITY BY OTHER GROUPS IS NOW DESCRIBED AS BEING INCAPABLE OF DEALING WITH BLACK CHILDREN.

WE'VE BEEN SWAMPED WITH STUDIES SHOWING HOW SCHOOLS DON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. THERE ARE STUDIES PURPORTING TO SHOW THAT CLASS SIZES DON'T MATTER, THAT BUSING DOESN'T MATTER, THAT EDUCATION HAS NO INFLUENCE ON FUTURE EARNINGS, THAT BLACK KIDS AREN'T SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT GENES, THAT SCHOOL CAN'T SOLVE SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS, AND THAT COMPENSATORY EDUCATION DOESN'T WORK. I COULD GO ON TO CITE MORE OF THESE DUBIOUS CONCLUSIONS AND FUTILE STUDIES, BUT THE POINT IS MADE.

AND THERE'S A GOOD REASON WHY THE POINT IS MADE. SCHOOLS HAVE ALWAYS DONE WHAT JOHN PORTER CALLS THE THREE "S'S" -- SORTING, SCREENING AND SELECTING. THEY'VE BEEN SOCIETY'S FILTER, SORTING, SCREENING AND SELECTING PEOPLE TO ASSUME THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY. THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY THEY'VE SORTED BLACKS OUT OF THE SYSTEM, SCREENED MOST OF US INTO LOW-PAY, LOW-STATUS JOBS, AND SELECTED A HANDFUL TO GAIN AN INSECURE FOOTHOLD IN THE SYSTEM.

WHEN THE ECONOMY WAS BOOMING AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WOKE THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE SYSTEM THAT SORTED BLACKS OUT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE MADE TO WORK TO SCREEN AND SELECT THEM IN. A BEGINNING WAS MADE. HEAD START, BLACK STUDIES, COMPENSATORY EDUCATION AND RECRUITMENT OF BLACKS INTO WHITE UNIVERSITIES BEGAN. BUT THEN THE PENDULUM SWUNG THE OTHER WAY. THESE PROGRAMS CAME UNDER ATTACK AND WERE CUT BACK OR ABANDONED. AND THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY THE REAR-GUARD ARMY OF SCHOLARS WHOSE DUTY WAS TO VALIDATE AND JUSTIFY THE CUTBACKS. NOW, IN A DEPRESSION ECONOMY, AND WITH PUBLIC EXPENDITURES UNDER PRESSURE THE IDEA THAT MONEY AND SCHOOLS DON'T MAKE MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE IS SIEZED UPON BY PUBLIC POLICY-MAKERS TO MAKE FURTHER CUTBACKS, THUS REINFORCING THE SYSTEM'S CHOSEN ROLE OF SCREENING BLACKS OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM OF OUR SOCIETY.

IF ALL THOSE STUDIES ARE CORRECT, WHY DON'T OFFICIALS JUST PUT A LOCK ON THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOOR AND FORGET ABOUT EDUCATION ALTOGETHER? IF THEY ARE CORRECT, WHY DO THE AUTHORS OF THOSE STUDIES AND THE

OFFICIALS WHO ACT ON THEM SPEND SMALL FORTUNES TO SEND THEIR KIDS TO SELECT PRIVATE SCHOOLS. AND IF THEY ARE CORRECT WHY ARE EMPLOYERS DEMANDING DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES FOR JOBS THAT NEVER REQUIRED THEM BEFORE?

YOU KNOW AND I KNOW THAT MOST OF THOSE STUDIES AREN'T WORTH THE PAPER THEY'RE WRITTEN ON. THEY WILL SOMEDAY BE SEEN FOR WHAT THEY ARE -- ARTIFACTS OF A SOCIETY LOOKING FOR EXCUSES TO SHORTCHANGE BLACK AND MINORITY CHILDREN FROM THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY.

WHILE THE CURRENT OUTLOOK FOR REVITALIZING OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM LOOKS BLEAK, I REFUSE TO ACCEPT A STRATEGY THAT TELLS US TO ABANDON HOPE AND TURN OUR EXCLUSIVE ATTENTION TO OTHER AREAS. IT IS PRECISELY AT THE TIME WHEN THE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE ARE SLIMMEST THAT WE MUST DIG IN AND RECONFIRM OUR CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO THE CAUSE OF EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL.

AND IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OUR GOALS ARE UNDER ATTACK FROM SO MANY SOURCES THAT WE MUST MAINTAIN VIGILANCE AND STRIKE BACK ON BEHALF OF OUR CONSTITUENTS -- LITTLE BLACK CHILDREN HUNGRY FOR THE EDUCATION THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN THE SUN.

THAT'S WHY I WANT TO DISCUSS WITH YOU TODAY SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES IN EDUCATION THAT CONCERN ME, CONCERN THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, AND CONCERN THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS. TIME PERMITS ME TO TOUCH ON ONLY A FEW OF THE MANY OUTSTANDING ISSUES, AND THE ONES I'VE CHOSEN TO SPEAK TO MAY NOT BE THE DOMINANT ONES TODAY BUT THEY ALL HAVE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL FOR HARM IF BLACK PEOPLE, AND ESPECIALLY BLACK EDUCATORS, IGNORE THEM IN FAVOR OF MORE IMMEDIATELY PRESSING ISSUES.

FIRST, I WANT TO INDICATE CLEARLY WHERE I'M COMING FROM. THE BASIC EDUCATIONAL GOAL OF THE URBAN LEAGUE IS TO BRING ABOUT AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT BEGINS WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ENDS WITH POST-SECONDARY WORK AT ALL LEVELS, INCLUDING CONTINUING ADULT EDUCATION. SUCH A SYSTEM SHOULD BE SEEN AS A HUMAN RIGHT WITH EQUAL ACCESS ASSURED TO ALL.

AS ROLAND PATTERSON SAYS: "THE SCHOOL AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM MUST BE TRULY OPENED TO THE PEOPLE. IT MUST BE EDUCATION FROM THE CRADLE THROUGHOUT RETIREMENT WITH FULL INVOLVEMENT OF THOSE SERVED."

NOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE PIE IN THE SKY AT A TIME OF BUDGET CUTS, DOWN-GRADING OF EDUCATION, POPULARIZATION OF

THE NOTION THAT SCHOOLS DON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND CONTINUED PRESSURES TO PRESERVE THE THREE S'S AT THE EXPENSE OF THE THREE Rs.

BUT AS A LONG-RANGE GOAL, THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE PROGRAM LENDS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE DAY-TO-DAY STRUGGLES WE MAKE TO REINVIGORATE OUR SCHOOLS. IT'S SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE WORKING TOWARD. IT IS SOMETHING THAT REFLECTS THE IDEAL OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION AT THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE.

FROM LOOKING AHEAD AT WHAT THE FUTURE OUGHT TO BE LIKE, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE PRESENT. AND IT'S A GRIM PICTURE WE SEE. OUR SCARCE RESOURCES ARE BEING SQUANDERED ON WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION WHILE PUBLIC SERVICES, AND ESPECIALLY THE SCHOOLS, ARE BEING CUT BACK. TIGHT BUDGETS ARE BECOMING A REALITY EVERYWHERE. CUTBACKS HAVE BECOME COMMON.

TO THE DEGREE THAT WE CAN STAVE OFF THESE CUTS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WE MUST DO SO, BUT REALITY TELLS US THAT THE BUDGET-CHOPPERS ARE IN THE MAJORITY TODAY. OUR NEXT LINE OF DEFENSE THEN, IS TO INSURE THAT THOSE CUTS DO NOT IMPACT ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY TO TAKE AWAY SOME OF THE VERY LITTLE WE HAVE.

THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT THIS IS WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW. CUTBACKS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DICTATED BY OVERALL BUDGET CUTS ARE BEING USED TO STRIP BLACK CHILDREN OF PROGRAMS THEY DEPEND UPON.

AND THE RATIONALE FOR THESE CUTS IS THE DECLINE IN SCHOOL ENROLLMENT. THE POST-WAR BABY BOOM IS OVER, THERE ARE SOME THREE MILLION FEWER CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TODAY THAN THERE WERE FIVE YEARS AGO, AND IT IS ESTIMATED THAT BY 1980 ENROLLMENT WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE BY ABOUT 2.4 MILLION BELOW 1975 LEVELS.

ALREADY THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT INDICATIONS THAT THE ENROLLMENT DECLINE IS BECOMING AN EXCUSE TO CUT BACK THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO BLACK CHILDREN. THIS HAPPENS BECAUSE CUTS ARE IMPOSED ON A PERCENTAGE BASIS THROUGHOUT AN ENTIRE SCHOOL DISTRICT, BASED ON A DECLINE IN THE DISTRICT'S ENROLLMENT. BUT THE DECLINE IS TAKING PLACE IN THE WHITE SECTORS OF THE DISTRICT; THE INNER-CITY BLACK SCHOOLS' ENROLLMENT IS STILL CONSTANT OR EVEN INCREASING. YET THOSE SCHOOLS LOSE TEACHERS AND FUNDS.

So within the basic issue of reduced resources available for educational purposes there arises the associated, and no less important issue, of the disproportionate effects of budget cuts on inner-city black schools.

Declining enrollment does not mean that there are fewer children in need of education, just that the numbers in the age group from seven to seventeen is smaller. Instead of using that as an excuse to cut budgets and close schools policy-makers ought to sieze the opportunity to move boldly into early childhood education programs.

As in other areas, the issues in early childhood education revolve around protecting what we have and extending those opportunities to children not yet served. The Urban League is committed to preservation of Head Start and community-based early childhood education programs. We are opposed to incorporating those programs into the school system. To do so inevitably means erosion of parent participation and the decline of community involvement.

Where Head Start has been successful, it has been precisely its reliance on intense parental and community

INVOLVEMENT THAT HAS ASSURED ITS SUCCESS. SUCH PROGRAMS HAVE DEMONSTRATED A FLEXIBILITY AND SERVE AS IMPORTANT EXTENSIONS OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY IN A WAY NOT CHARACTERISTIC OF MOST SCHOOL DISTRICT BUREAUCRACIES. EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT HEAD START CHILDREN REAP SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS OF THEIR EARLY SCHOOLING AND THAT THEIR PARENTS ARE MORE INVOLVED WITH THEIR PROGRESS AND LATER ON, BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS. AND THE REASON FOR THESE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS IS PRECISELY THE FACT THAT THE PROGRAMS ARE COMMUNITY-BASED AND ARE OUTSIDE THE BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYTEM.

AT THE SAME TIME THAT WE SEEK TO PRESERVE HEAD START, WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO EXTENDING THE CONCEPT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TO INCLUDE PRE-KINDERGATEN. THE VERY YEARS MOST EXPERTS CLAIM TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT IN A CHILD'S ABILITY TO ABSORB LEARNING ARE THE SAME YEARS FROM WHICH CHILDREN ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS. INSTEAD OF BEING IN A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, EXPOSED TO INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES, MOST CHILDREN FROM THREE TO SEVEN ARE PARKED IN FRONT OF THE TV SET, LEARNING TO BECOME GOOD CONSUMERS AND SOAKING UP A PRE-DIGESTED FANTASY WORLD.

OVER THIRTY STATES TODAY STILL DO NOT EVEN MANDATE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN THEIR SCHOOL DISTRICTS. YET THE BENEFITS OF PRE-KINDERGATEN CLASSES HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATED TIME AND AGAIN BY INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS.

WITH SURPLUS CLASSROOM SPACE BECOMING AVAILABLE AND WITH LARGER NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET THAN EVER BEFORE, IT IS BECOMING CLEAR THAT A CONSTITUENCY FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION IS IN THE MAKING. THE URBAN LEAGUE AND BLACK EDUCATORS SHOULD BE PUSHING HARD FOR THIS, AND PUSHING TOO, TO MAKE ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN, THEIR PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY ITSELF.

THE URBAN LEAGUE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IS BASED ON SOLID EXPERIENCE. OUR OWN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DEMONSTRATES STRIKING ADVANCES BY THOSE CHILDREN ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUR PROGRAM, AND BY EXTENSION, ARGUES FORCEFULLY FOR COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS FOR URBAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES.

OUR TEN YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN RUNNING THE STREET ACADEMIES HAVE ALSO EQUIPPED US WITH SOME INSIGHTS

INTO MAKING AN IMPACT ON THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES, CONCERNED TEACHING AND STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY ALL MESHED TOGETHER TO TURN HIGH SCHOOL PUSH-OUTS INTO COLLEGE ENTRANTS AND EMPLOYABLE PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS.

BUT THAT EXPERIENCE ALSO TAUGHT US THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERVENING IN THE NON-CLASSROOM ASPECTS OF THE LEARNING PROCESS, SPECIFICIALLY IN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNSELING AND OTHER PUPIL SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT THE TYPICAL INNER-CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM NEGLECTS.

OUR DESIRE IS TO BRING THE URBAN LEAGUE AND BLACK EDUCATORS INTO A CLOSER, MORE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP GEARED TO THE NEEDS OF BLACK SCHOOL CHILDREN. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO BRING TO BLACK CHILDREN THE SAME OPTIONS AND THE SAME CAREER CHOICES AVAILABLE TO WHITE KIDS. TO THIS END, NEW APPROACHES TO COUNSELING SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND DEVELOPED. AND THIS TASK IS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY THE PERVASIVE PRACTICE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS DROPPING GUIDANCE COUNSELLING SLOTS WHENEVER CUTS ARE NEEDED IN THE BUDGET

EVEN WHEN TIMES ARE GOOD SUCH COUNSELING IS OFTEN AVAILABLE ONLY AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL; MORE THAN FOUR OUT

OF FIVE INNER-CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS NEVER HAD CAREER GUIDANCE AVAILABLE. YET THIS IS THE STAGE AT WHICH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE MOTIVATED AND MADE AWARE OF THE CAREER POSSIBILITIES OPEN TO THEM. THE PULL OF THE STREETS IS STRONG, ESPECIALLY WHEN MEASURED AGAINST THE ATTRACTION OF CONTINUED STUDY IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. THOSE KIDS NEED TO KNOW WHY THEY SHOULD STAY IN SCHOOL; THEY NEED TO HAVE THE INTEREST IN A CAREER GOAL TO HELP THEM RESIST THE SIREN SONG OF THE STREETS.

THAT IS WHY THE URBAN LEAGUE IS NOW PREPARING AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM THAT WILL ENABLE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO BEGIN TO OFFER SOME FORM OF CAREER GUIDANCE TO THEIR STUDENTS. WE HAVE CONCEPTUALIZED A PROGRAM WHICH WILL UTILIZE TECHNICAL ADVANCES TO ENABLE THE CLASSROOM TEACHER TO PRESENT VIDEO-TAPED GUIDANCE AND CAREER PRESENTATIONS TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN.

IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT YOUNGSTERS NEED TO BE INTRODUCED TO A WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBLE CAREERS AND TO THE PEOPLE NOW PRACTICING THEM, BE THEY DOCTORS OR X-RAY TECHNICIANS, FIREMEN OR LAWYERS. SUCH A GUIDANCE CONCEPT MADE AVAILABLE AT COST TO THE SCHOOLS CAN OVERCOME THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM'S BUREAUCRATIC INERTIA, OVERCOME THE SCARCITY OF TRAINED PERSONNEL, OVERCOME THE PERSISTENT NEGLECT OF CAREER GUIDANCE FOR YOUNGER

CHILDREN, AND HOPEFULLY, OVERCOME THE LACK OF MOTIVATION AND INTEREST BY SCHOOLCHILDREN.

THE WHOLE ISSUE OF WHAT WE CALL PUPIL PERSONNEL SUPPORT SYSTEMS IS OF PRIME IMPORTANCE. ANOTHER NEGLECTED AREA IN WHICH WE HAVE DISPLAYED STRONG ADVOCACY FOR THE INTERESTS OF BLACK CHILDREN IS THE ALARMING TREND OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND OF THE DISPROPORTIONATE RATE AT WHICH BLACK KIDS ARE BEING PUSHED OUT OF SCHOOL FOR RELATIVELY MINOR OFFENSES OR FOR MATTERS ENTIRELY BEYOND THEIR CONTROL.

THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND HAS AMPLY DOCUMENTED THAT ALMOST ALL SUCH SUSPENSIONS ARE NOT FOR VIOLENT OR DANGEROUS OFFENSES AND THAT EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION IS BEING DENIED MANY CHILDREN TODAY FOR NO VALID PURPOSE.

THE WHOLE ISSUE OF SUSPENSIONS, AND OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS, HAS BEEN TOO NARROWLY CONCEIVED. WE SHOULD TAKE OUR CUE FROM A REPORT DRAWN UP BY A COMMISSION STUDYING THE PROBLEM FOR THE ATLANTA SCHOOLS THAT CONCLUDES:

"IF SCHOOLS ARE PLEASANT AND EXCITING PLACES TO LEARN; IF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND CONCERN; AND IF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATE IN THIS EFFORT; THEN MOST OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS CAN BE PREVENTED."

IT STANDS TO REASON THAT WHEN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISIONS AFFECTING THEIR LIVES AND WHEN THEY HAVE A MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER THE INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE SUPPOSED TO SERVE THEIR NEEDS, THEY WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM THOSE INSTITUTIONS, AND THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE WILL FUNCTION BETTER FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.

ONE AREA IN WHICH BLACKS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN EXCLUDED FROM MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AND CONTROL IS THE WHOLE FIELD OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION HAS BEEN USED TO SHUNT YOUNG PEOPLE OFF THE TRACK LEADING TO COLLEGE AND ONTO THE TRACK FOR DEAD-END, LOW-PAY, LOW-STATUS JOBS. WE'VE HAD SMALL NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO BEAT THE SYSTEM AND GOT A COLLEGE EDUCATION AND LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE SWAMPED BY THE SYSTEM AND RELEGATED TO MARGINAL ECONOMIC EXISTENCE.

THAT HISTORIC TREND CONTINUES TODAY. LARGER NUMBERS OF BLACK YOUTH ARE IN COLLEGE THAN EVER BEFORE AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO CREATE THE KINDS OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO ENCOURAGE MORE TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATIONS. UNTIL BLACKS ACHIEVE THE SAME PROPORTION OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES AS WHITES WE MUST FIGHT TO CLOSE THE GAP. THUS WE ARE

COMMITTED TO SUPPORT OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICIES, STUDENT AID PROGRAMS AND FREE TUITION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

BUT EVEN AMONG WHITES, ONLY ABOUT A QUARTER OF THE WHITE COLLEGE AGE POPULATION IS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE, SO EVEN IF BLACKS DO ACHIEVE PARITY WITH WHITES IN COLLEGE PARTICIPATION , WHAT HAPPENS TO THE THREE OUT OF FOUR BLACKS THAT WON'T GO ON TO COLLEGE?

THAT'S A QUESTION THAT MUST CONCERN US BECAUSE IT LEADS DIRECTLY INTO THE KINDS OF OPTIONS AND TRAINING AVAILABLE TO US. BY REJECTING VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, WE PLAY DIRECTLY INTO THE HANDS OF THE RACISTS THAT DON'T WANT US IN SKILLED JOBS AND IN STRONG UNIONS. WE PLAY RIGHT INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO WANT TO KEEP US UNSKILLED AND IN MARGINAL OCCUPATIONS, AWAY, FAR AWAY, FROM WHERE THE ACTION IS.

THE FACT IS THAT BLACK PEOPLE ARE BEING TRAINED FOR OBSELETE JOBS. THIS ECONOMY HAS BEEN CALLED A POST-INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY, WITH JOB OPPORTUNITIES SHRINKING IN THE TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIAL SECTOR AND MUSHROOMING IN THE NEW HIGH TECHNOLOGY FIELDS THAT REQUIRE TECHNICAL TRAINING OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER.

THIS TRAINING CAN BE ACHIEVED IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS, OR IN SOME FORM OF JUNIOR COLLEGE OR OTHER NON-COLLEGE POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLING.

WE CANNOT LET OURSELVES BECOME BLINDED BY THE PAST RECORD OF RACISM OF SUCH INSTITUTIONS TO DENY TO OUR CHILDREN, OUR PUPILS, AND OUR PEOPLE THE ACQUISITION OF SKILLS TRAINING THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO HOLD DECENT JOBS AT GOOD PAY. WE CAN'T LET OURSELVES BECOME SO OBSESSED BY COLLEGE THAT WE DON'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES WE NEED.

OUR JOB ISN'T TO WRITE OFF THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE OPERATED IN RACIST WAYS IN THE PAST, BUT TO AGGRESSIVELY ASSERT OUR INTEREST IN THEM AND MOVE TO GAIN ACCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND A DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THEIR OPERATIONS. I SEE NO REASON TO STAND ASIDE AND CLOSE OFF ACCESS TO HIGH PAYING JOBS IN COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS TO BLACK KIDS. INSTEAD I SAY WE OUGHT TO BE DEMANDING THOSE INSTITUTIONS RESPOND TO OUR NEEDS. WE OUGHT TO BE IN THERE FIGHTING WHEN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE PUTS IN A SOPHISTICATED COMPUTER SCIENCES CURRICULUM IN THE SUBURBS AND A NURSE'S TRAINING COURSE IN THE GHETTO.

WE'VE GOT TO BE CONSISTENT IN DEMANDING EQUAL ACCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE FROM THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT AFFECT OUR LIVES AND DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN.

I'M SICK OF HEARING ABOUT HOW BLACK KIDS CAN'T PERFORM, HOW POOR KIDS CAN'T DO WELL IN SCHOOL, AND HOW ABSTRACTIONS LIKE POVERTY OR BAD HOUSING OR HOME ENVIRONMENT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SCHOOL FAILURES. I'M TIRED OF HEARING ALL SCHOOL PROBLEMS REDUCED BY THE MEDIA TO THE BUSING ISSUE AND THE BROAD ACCEPTANCE OF THE DENIAL OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF LITTLE BLACK CHILDREN. AND I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE EASY ASSUMPTIONS OF WELL-OFF PEOPLE THAT POOR KIDS CAN'T LEARN, DON'T WANT TO LEARN, AND AREN'T FITTED FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN SHOVEL JOBS WHEN THEY GET OLDER.

I'M HERE TO SAY THAT AT A TIME WHEN WHITE AMERICANS ARE DESPAIRING ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE SCHOOLS TO PERFORM, AT A TIME WHEN WHITE AMERICANS PRETEND THAT THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM NEVER REALLY WORKED ANYHOW, THAT BLACK PEOPLE HAVE FAITH IN EDUCATION AND ALWAYS HAD THAT FAITH AND HAVE IT STILL.

I'M HERE TO SAY THAT THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE HAS THAT FAITH TOO, THAT WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO HELPING

TO BUILD AN EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE THAT REFLECTS THE INTERESTS, NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE.

AND I KNOW THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS TOO, HAS THAT FAITH, THE FAITH IN THE POWER OF THE BOOK AND THE GLORY OF THE WORD, THE FAITH THAT SAYS AN EDUCATION IS AN OPEN DOOR TO A FULLER, MORE COMPLETE LIFE AND A TOOL WITH WHICH WE CAN EARN OUR BREAD AND STAND TALL AND PROUD.

WE SHARE THAT FAITH, WE SHARE THE DREAMS AND HOPES OF THE FOLK OUT THERE WHO NEVER HEARD OUR NAMES BUT WHO DEPEND ON US.

DEPENDING ON US TODAY ARE THOSE LITTLE BLACK CHILDREN WHOSE EYES ARE LARGE WITH THE VISION OF THE WORLD TO COME.

DEPENDING ON US ARE THOSE LITTLE BLACK CHILDREN WHO COME TO SCHOOL WITH HOLES IN THEIR CLOTHES AND RAGGED SHOES AND EMPTY STOMACHS.

DEPENDING ON US ARE THE PARENTS OF THOSE KIDS WHO KNOW THE HARDSHIP OF POVERTY AND DREAM OF BETTER FOR THEIR KIDS.

DEPENDING ON US ARE THOSE YOUNG FOLK WALKING THE THIN LINE BETWEEN THE YOUTH GANG ON ONE SIDE AND THE DRUG PUSHER ON THE OTHER, STRIVING TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE CHAINS OF BOTH.

DEPENDING ON US ARE THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF BLACK FOLK WHO LOOK TO EDUCATION AS THE FREEING BALM, THE SALVE THAT WILL EMANCIPATE THEIR KIDS FROM THE BONDAGE OF POVERTY.

YES, THERE ARE FOLK OUT THERE DEPENDING ON US AND IT IS IN THEIR NAME, IN THEIR INTERESTS, WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION, THAT WE MUST FORGE AHEAD TO A NEWER DAY AND A BETTER FUTURE.

AND SO LET US, THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, RENEW TOGETHER OUR COMMITMENT TO FULFILL THE NEEDS OF THOSE MILLIONS DEPENDING ON US, AND ENABLE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL AMERICANS.

LET US GO FORTH AND FIGHT FOR BLACK PARENTS AND EDUCATORS IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. LET US GO FORTH AND HELP TURN THE SCHOOLHOUSE INTO THE AVENUE FOR BLACK ACHIEVEMENT AND BLACK SUCCESS.

YES, OUR OBJECTIVES ARE IDENTICAL, OUR CONSTITUENCY THE SAME, OUR COMMITMENT EQUAL. OUR MISSION IS A JOINT ONE. OURS IS A RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY. "WE'RE SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY. WE HAVE TO FIGHT THOUGH WE HAVE TO CRY. WE HAVE TO HOLD UP THE BLOOD-STAINED BANNER. WE HAVE TO HOLD IT UP UNTIL WE DIE."

TOGETHER, LET THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE BE FOR BLACK PEOPLE A ROCK IN A WEARY LAND, A SHELTER IN A TIME OF STORM. LET US SPEAK OUT ON BEHALF OF THE EDUCATION OF BLACK CHILDREN, LET US SPEAK OUT FORCEFULLY AND LIKE THE TREE THAT STANDETH BY THE RIVERS OF WATER, WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED IN DEFENSE OF THE INTERESTS OF BLACK CHILDREN, BLACK PARENTS AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

TO THAT END, LET US NEITHER STUMBLE NOR FALTER, LET US MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES, LET US RUN AND NOT BE WEARY, LET US WALK AND NOT BE FAINT.

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